

# **Journey to 2030**

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## **Global Perspectives and Anchoring Illustrations**





## Introduction

Many challenges face educators today, in Arizona, across the United States, and worldwide. Teacher leaders across Arizona, as they face these challenges that stretch into the future, are committed to several key tenets of their practice.

- *Students' Learning and Growth are Our Top Priorities:* First and foremost, the education of students is the number one priority. In all conversations about education, no matter how great the changes that need to occur are, everything comes down to what will help students learn.
- *The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts:* Teacher leaders can do more together than alone. Building communities of educators, administrators, parents, community members, and policymakers will mean affecting more change than could be achieved with just one voice. Joining our voices and letting them be heard is how we will make progress.
- *Twenty-First Century Learning Means More Time and Resources for Students AND Teachers:* Students today are growing up and learning in a totally new environment—one saturated with technology and driven by creative thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. Teachers and students cannot meet the challenges of the 21st century without time and resources devoted to success in this new learning environment. We must make our needs known; we must demand the necessities for teaching the students of this century.

The purpose of this special report, *Journey to 2030: Global Perspectives and Anchoring Illustrations*, is to help teacher leaders across the state understand both the challenges and triumphs being experienced in diverse contexts, and to inspire those leaders, whether experienced or emerging, to positive action.

The Pointers for Practice that close this report offer just a few examples, in various settings, of ways teacher leaders can move forward to address difficulties and create change. However, those who read this report, from educators just discovering their capacity for leadership to participants at every level of educational decision-making, should come away with an understanding that this is just the beginning, and that transformation will occur in as many ways as there are teacher leaders to imagine them. The Arizona K12 Center is committed to the vision for change presented here, rooted in fundamental beliefs, encompassing a global perspective, and expansive in its ability to reshape the landscape of teaching and learning in Arizona and beyond.

## **Journey to 2030 and a Vision for the Future**

In the fall of 2011, the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team, a group of 20 teacher leaders from throughout the state, came together to create a vision for the future of teaching and learning in Arizona. In partnership with the Center for Teaching Quality, the team worked together to “imagineer” what could be in classrooms across the state.

After additional work at the *Seventh Annual Teacher Leadership Institute*, the Arizona K12 Center, Arizona’s TeacherSolutions Team, and the Center for Teaching Quality partnered on a special report: *Journey to 2030: Our Vision for the Future of Teaching and Learning*. After exploring emergent realities in our schools and districts, the report shared a set of goals and ideas for what teaching could, and should, look like in Arizona’s future. The Arizona K12 Center remains committed to that vision, which includes personalized learning, specialized support for teachers, community-building throughout schools and their communities, and strong, dynamic teacher leadership to improve learning for every student.

Now it’s time to move forward, with those high and meaningful goals in mind, as well as the new challenges, inspirational successes, and further-sharpening visions put forward by the teacher leaders who attended the Arizona K12 Center’s *Eighth Annual Teacher Leadership Institute: The Global Fourth Way* in June 2013.

## **Leading by Example, Learning from Others: The Global Fourth Way**

What is *The Global Fourth Way*? Co-authored by esteemed educators and thinkers Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley, this book explores a variety of anchoring examples from across the world that demonstrate excellence in teaching and learning. The examples demonstrate the “Fourth Way” of educational change, a term Hargreaves and Shirley coined in their earlier book, *The Fourth Way*. They describe the development of the “three ways” of educational change throughout the past decades, culminating in a vision for a new way forward: the Fourth Way. This way of change is defined by several characteristics, as put forward in *The Global Fourth Way* (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012). These characteristics include:

- Teaching, rather than being driven solely by “raising the bar and narrowing the gap” of student achievement, is a *moral imperative*, defined by shared values and beliefs in changing teaching and learning for everyone.
- Leadership revolves around “*collective responsibility* rather than vertical accountability.” All are responsible for shared leadership, and together, all are committed to developing and implementing meaningful change and innovation.

- Teaching is meant for *all learners*. Learning is *personalized and broadened* to include all learning styles and interests.
- Testing and the collection of data do not *drive teaching and learning*. Both are tools to be used in the greater pursuit of developing the best strategies and making the best decisions in learning communities.

The Fourth Way can have many different appearances in action, as Hargreaves and Shirley demonstrate in the case studies included in *The Global Fourth Way*. However, in identifying characteristics of this way, Hargreaves and Shirley found that educational change will almost always include shared vision and responsibility, a thoughtful approach to the tools of the 21st century (technology and data, in particular), ethical decisions driving change, professionalization of teaching and respect for the profession, and more mindful and morally informed methods and means of improvement and innovation.

These tenets are reflective of the goals and the commitment to change shared by the community of teacher leaders in Arizona. By understanding the need for change, being inspired by one another, and developing a set of concrete recommendations for practice at all levels of educational leadership, Arizona’s educators can affect change in the manner of the Fourth Way.

## **Making the Case for Change**

It has perhaps never been clearer that educators in our state and nation are fighting an uphill battle. According to 2012’s MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, the percentage of teachers who describe themselves as “very satisfied” with their jobs is at its lowest in 25 years. Of course, there are many causes. One is likely stress, as slightly more than half of the teachers surveyed said they were “under great stress several days a week.” This level is on the rise (MetLife, 2012).

Another reason for this dissatisfaction is a lack of opportunities for continuous learning and intellectual rigor. According to the research of Dr. Anne N. Catena, Ed. D., of Princeton University, those who stay in teaching for more than five years often cite their ability to learn and grow as professionals as reasons for their choice. Conversely, those who leave teaching may do so because they are not pushed intellectually as much as they need to be to stay engaged.

Teachers across the nation are hungry for change and for learning and leadership opportunities—including, increasingly, hybrid roles that do not require leaving the classroom, as opposed to more traditional administrative roles. To make those changes happen and to seize those opportunities to lead, we must first make a case for such change by highlighting some of the chief challenges teachers are facing in Arizona today.

## **Exclusion from Conversations and Lack of Communication**

Many teachers today do not feel that they have a place at the table, whether at the school, district, or policymaking level. Dissatisfaction stems in great part from a feeling that their voices are not being heard and that leadership opportunities are not available for them. Furthermore, a lack of communication between teachers and administrators makes it difficult for teachers to do their jobs well. Often, teachers aren't told where decisions or mandates are coming from—or who makes the decisions that affect their everyday practice. As such, they experience a great deal of confusion and frustration about how to implement the myriad of changes, some of which feel contradictory, in their classrooms. These communication breakdowns and feelings of being left out of the conversation drive the notion that teachers' voices cannot be heard and therefore cannot make a difference.

## **Working Harder, Not Smarter**

Teachers—even and perhaps especially those who have successfully taken on roles as teacher leaders within their communities—have more to contend with, and less time to get better at their practice and improve student learning. With state and federal mandates, new standards, changing evaluation requirements and instruments, and other challenges, the array of new things teachers must juggle grows and grows, making their work more difficult.

At the same time, resources to implement these changes remain scant, meaning that while teachers' workloads are growing, they do not have the opportunity to learn to implement these changes more intelligently. This impacts not just the teachers themselves, but also the wider education system, as decision-makers are not effectively using the knowledge and skills of teacher leaders to implement new policies; instead, they are forcing these measures, in a top-down manner, into jumbled and harried enactment. Arizona teachers note that in countries with particularly successful educational structures and high-performing students, like Finland, teachers *teach less*—40 percent less than American teachers—and spend more time on professional development, planning, collaborating, and other methods of improving practice, thereby working “smarter,” without the strain of working too hard to be truly effective (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012).

## **Data, While Useful in Context, Can Shift the Focus Away from Students**

With today's focus on student data, especially standardized test scores, as a means to measure everything from learning to teacher effectiveness, teachers are feeling drowned in data and pressured to use it, sometimes in haphazard ways. Some note that because of the emphasis on data, students become “just a number,” rather than being treated as individuals who must be

engaged, empowered, and inspired. Overly data-driven teaching and learning can tend to exclude those who need powerful instruction the most—those at the “bottom” of the data, who are not likely to perform well on high-stakes tests but who need just as much if not more attention than the students whose data reflects what schools and districts are seeking.

In addition, there is concern that testing, test data, and genuinely effective teaching and learning are not tied together with fidelity. As such, data is not used cohesively to inform decisions. On top of that, many educators have expressed the concern that they do not receive sufficient training to look at data intelligently, making data difficult to use in a smart, thoughtful way in most school sites and contexts.

Decisions about the use of data are often made at school sites and in districts without a common understanding between teachers, administrators, and district personnel of what valid data and appropriate uses for data are; the involved parties are not applying a shared vision for the data, meaning there is a large disconnect between how data is viewed by various parties, and how it is used. Finally, the focus on data at the expense of other ways of viewing student and teacher work and achievement can mean that only one or two metrics are being used to gauge student needs. This can leave out other, more meaningful methods of discerning how students learn best.

While many forms of data, such as student work and observational information, are vital in the understanding of how students are learning, and while some testing data is appropriate in a meaningful and fair context, teachers struggle with the use of data in a variety of ways.

### **Varying Student Needs, from Instructional to Basic Necessities**

Differentiated instruction is of more paramount importance than ever before in today’s 21st century learning environment. However, the blanket need for “differentiation” is often used against teachers who face certain challenges in their classrooms and ask for help with those issues. This term has become a catchall and a Band-Aid, and is often not supported by an appropriate understanding of its meaning or resources for its implementation. Without adequate professional development and support, teachers are having trouble applying differentiation and true 21st century learning in their classrooms. They are eager for more learning offered around the *how*, *when* and *why* of instructional differentiation.

But it’s not just instructional needs that separate students and make it difficult to address all the learners in a single classroom; basic socioeconomic issues—for example, nutrition and a stable home environment—vary vastly in different communities, making it even more challenging for teachers to address all the

students in a single classroom. When some students are coming to school without having eaten breakfast, or are required to stay home to take care of siblings when a parent is unable to do so, it is nearly impossible to address those issues along with the learning needs of the rest of the class. Teachers are put in difficult situations because of changing and, in many cases, worsening socioeconomic factors within their schools' communities.

### **Lack of Community Engagement with Local Schools**

Just as communication within schools and districts is difficult to effectively maintain, teachers have trouble engaging with the larger community, including parents. With all the challenges of day-to-day practice within the walls of a classroom, teachers are further challenged to reach outside those walls and/or invite community members in. As a result, many people do not understand what teachers do or how they foster student learning. This may contribute to a lack of awareness in the wider community of teachers as true professionals. Parents, other community members, local businesses, and organizations do not see what goes on in their local schools enough, and therefore may have a perception of teaching and learning in today's classrooms that is far from reality.

Many other challenges face teachers in today's educational environment, from budget constraints to an adversarial political climate to a sense of competition and/or mistrust within school sites. However, Arizona's teachers are already rising to these challenges, and will continue to do so.

### **Anchoring Illustrations**

In the face of these challenges, schools and districts across Arizona are achieving inspiring things.

#### **Close-Knit Teaching Team**

The math department at Highland Junior High School in Gilbert Public Schools has established a strong sense of connectedness. The department teachers plan and work together, providing their students with stronger lessons by virtue of their collaboration. Crystal Francom, NBCT, an eighth grade math teacher, said the department has had a strong sense of teamwork since she came to the school. Other teachers look to the department as a team of leaders and culture-builders who exemplify the power of working together. Math students at Highland never get instruction or ideas from just one teacher; they benefit from the efforts of a strong team with an eye toward innovation—a team that never says, “Let's just do it like we did last year.” The Highland math department also puts together cross-classroom activities, like a Math Amazing Race, which featured different learning stations throughout the



school. In addition, the math teachers help each other with differentiation; if a student needs extra help on a specific topic outside one teacher's expertise, they band together to find the answers and the best way to present them to that individual student. Because of the math department's leadership and strong sense of community, students have access to a deeper and more collective knowledge.

### **Professional Learning Innovation**

In April 2013, the Dysart Unified School District brought together a large group of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, community groups, and legislators, to begin a strategic planning process. Together, they asked: Who is our ideal Dysart graduate? What do we want him or her to know, and what skills do we want him or her to have? What is at the heart of his or her learning? The process gave teacher leaders the opportunity to express how accomplished teaching could influence student learning—not just on the content level, but allowing students to grow holistically.

One initiative that arose from those teachers' voices was Your CaLL, or Community as Leaders and Learners. Your CaLL allows not just teachers, but other staff members, including administrators and support staff, to design their own professional development around an area of interest and/or need. Kristie Martorelli, the 2012 Arizona Teacher of the Year, worked on the development of Your CaLL, and said that in focus groups, members of different Dysart departments all wanted the same thing: the opportunity to personalize their experiences. In addition to fulfilling that wish, Your CaLL will also provide an arena for teacher leadership. As participants gain more experience with designing their own projects, they'll move from the Your CaLL candidate stage to the levels of member, advanced, and finally fellow. Each stage will come with both new responsibilities and new recognition—everything from unique email signature graphics denoting participants' experience level to formal Governing Board recognition. While Your CaLL is in its very earliest stages of implementation, it illustrates the ways in which differentiated and personalized professional learning can contribute to building teacher leadership capacity.

### **Gardening and Project-Based Learning**

Borton Magnet School in the Tucson Unified School District focuses on student success by implementing Project-Based Learning, with the help of a campus primed for asking and answering big questions. The school has 19 gardens and a three-acre bird sanctuary, as well as a composting program and both active and passive water harvesting systems. Molly Reed, NBCT and the school's outdoor education teacher, rallied her school community and led the way to a school culture of innovative, exciting, and strongly teacher-

powered student learning. She leads the coordination of projects involving the garden, often across grade levels. For example, kindergarteners and first graders recently asked the question: “How does food bring communities together?” Students have brought in history and experiences with food from their own homes. They’ve compiled recipes for a school cookbook, talked to their families about their food memories, and even had a few parents bring food trucks to the school. The school commits to keeping students engaged and excited about hands-on learning and tackling major, real-world issues, such as the school’s carbon footprint and community nutrition. Reed and the rest of her team understand how to activate student learning and use projects to extend and deepen understanding. Molly Reed’s leadership and strong collaboration makes this rich Project-Based Learning possible.

### **Sharing Data with the Community**

At Mountain View Elementary School in the Humboldt Unified School District, student test data is a shared responsibility. Diane Lerette, NBCT, an instructional specialist at Mountain View, and her principal, JoAnne Bindell, teamed up in the fall of 2013 to set up Data Nights for every grade in the school. They piloted the idea with the third grade, in part to help parents understand the implications of the Move On When Reading statute. Parents were highly encouraged to attend an hour-long evening session, where they would see and learn more about their own students’ and the class and grade’s data.

The school shared score graphs from each class, with individual data identified by student ID number for privacy. That way, parents could understand not just their own child’s scores, but also how their child was performing within the context of the class. Lerette called the experience “more eye-opening than a report card” for parents. To take the experience further, the school helped parents understand how they could help their individual students grow in the areas in which they were struggling, providing take-home information and activities. This created a great deal of buy-in among parents, who were eager to see how they could directly impact their children’s growth. A second data night, this time held in individual classrooms, rather than with the whole grade in the cafeteria, provided re-testing data so parents could see how their children had grown, and, in many cases, how their own efforts at home had paid off.

When the third grade pilot was successful, Mountain View extended the program, so that all grade levels now have Data Nights. The school has found that these outreach programs contribute to a better and more positive understanding of the school’s role in students’ learning and in the larger community. A pervasive feeling of separateness from the community has begun to dissipate, and parents are taking a more active role in school life and culture. Giving stakeholders an actual *stake* in student learning, through

Data Nights, has allowed community engagement to flourish, and has helped struggling students, as their parents are encouraged and excited to play a larger role in their school success.

### **Designing Better Lessons**

Leadership on the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards, better known nationwide as the Common Core, is of vital importance in today's educational landscape. Mary Lynch, NBCT, a seventh grade language arts teacher in Gilbert Public Schools, is one of the Arizona educators working with the National Education Association as a Better Lessons participant. Arizona is strongly represented in this initiative, with Arizona educators at several grade levels in both math and English/language arts participating.

With Better Lessons, NEA selected five teachers for every grade level across the country to share and write about the lessons they teach every day and how they align with the Common Core, so other teachers have resources to help them implement the new standards. Lynch said she thinks the standards cause teachers to elevate their practice, challenging not just their students, but themselves. That's why she has taken on a leadership role at the national level, inviting teachers virtually into her classroom and the thought processes behind her teaching so that they can see standards-aligned lessons. For Lynch, teacher leadership means opening up her practice so others can learn, as well as engaging in reflective practice as she looks back over her lessons and thinks about how they might help other educators nationwide.

### **Technology Ambassadors**

Lake Havasu Unified School District was having trouble getting teachers to engage in and implement the traditional, after-school professional development the district offered. Knowing that teachers who receive powerful professional learning can in turn enhance student learning, especially when it comes to new technology tools, Michelle Burke, the district's Technology Integration Specialist, did not resign herself to the tepid response to professional development. Instead, she worked at the district level to utilize and connect in-place resources in a new way: the Technology Ambassador Program.

Each school in Lake Havasu had one technology representative, who acted as the go-to person on site when teachers needed technological assistance. Burke realized these on-campus resources could transform professional development around technology. She led the creation of an online space where teachers could learn about technology tools that would actually be useful in the classroom. The district targets one such tool each month. If teachers learn to use the tool *and* implement it, documenting that implementation with two photos for evidence and one small survey, they receive one hour of professional development credit.

The program offers teachers the ability to design their own learning and implementation. They have autonomy to plan and develop on their own time, in their own way, rather than being committed to a regimented technology professional development track. In addition to leading the Technology Ambassador Program, Burke has also facilitated the opportunity for teachers to advocate for themselves and represent their learning to administration. She invites teachers who have been successful with integration to present at administrative meetings. The teachers often bring students to help present. “When kids are showing administrators the power of these tools in the classroom, they get it,” she said. Her leadership, as well as Lake Havasu teachers’ dedication to making the project work, has transformed how professional development around technology works—and succeeds—in the district.

Many other schools across the state are making great strides in teacher leadership initiatives and are demonstrating qualities of the Fourth Way of educational change. The Arizona K12 Center is committed to continuing to hear and share those stories. By participating in the Arizona K12 Center’s “Ed Week ... Every Week,” the “Stories from Schools” blog, and connecting on Twitter and Facebook, schools with stories to share can find a voice, find each other, and build on their successes to change education in Arizona.

### Pointers for Practice

As demonstrated by the ways in which schools and districts across the state are meeting challenges, as well as the ways in which they are planning to strengthen their teacher leadership capacities to inform and drive change, it is possible for educators to make their voices heard. However, the Fourth Way of educational change is difficult to follow, even for some of the top-performing nations, states, districts, and schools in the world. It takes the commitment of teacher leaders to influence multiple realms of decision-making to engender meaningful and mindful change.

It may also take some guidance. The community of teacher leaders, including the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team, that came together at the *Eighth Annual Teacher Leadership Institute* worked together to generate next steps teacher leaders and other stakeholders could take to make Fourth Way change happen on a classroom, school, district, and system-wide level.

These Pointers for Practice are both aspirational and generative. Teacher leaders have their own ideas for how to affect change in their various contexts. As such, no blueprint or how-to manual for teacher leadership will suffice, or meet the needs of every educator out to make a difference. Instead, these pointers are meant to begin a dialogue about how teacher leadership can have the most positive impact at all levels of the education system. They are meant

to poke holes in the top-down conception of education that many people, including, unfortunately, some intimately involved stakeholders, have. They are meant to provide teacher-driven and powerful ideas for ways to influence the system, and to provoke further thought, so that teacher leaders can both put these ideas to use in ways that make sense in their settings, and imagine their own paths to change.

Impactful teacher leaders can design their own implementation strategies for these pointers, working together with others in their network and reaching out to a broad range of parties, some of whom they may not have previously imagined collaborating with, in order to make a difference.

### **Classroom Level:**

- In order to believe change is possible, let alone to pursue it, teachers must *discover their moral purpose and examine their critical dispositions*. As the Fourth Way shows us, educational change should not be driven by scattershot data or political forces, but by the ethics of stakeholders who know what students need and what they deserve. To participate in the process of moving forward, teachers must examine what they believe about education, what they know about their own students, and what they see as an ideal future for those students. Only through such thorough and meaningful reflection can individual teachers move forward with effective change strategies.
- For teachers' voices to be heard, they must first *develop a disposition of self-trust*. This means letting go of the notion that, "I am just a teacher" and acknowledging that your point of view, and your experience with your students' needs, could be the most important contribution to the conversation at any level. Teachers must trust that their day-in, day-out work with their students gives them unparalleled expertise and understanding of who their students are and how they will best learn and grow. Of course, to find their voices, teachers need the encouragement and trust of their peers and administrators. As a profession, it can be hard to get past ingrained social notions of a hierarchy of expertise within education, but teachers must see themselves as the best possible agents for change in order to come forward with confidence.
- Classroom teachers must *work together and communicate* in order to avoid negativity at school sites, as well as to learn from one another. Teaching cohorts and communities are an important building block in the larger context of schools and districts, especially when it comes to asking for the resources they need and addressing challenges as a team. This collaboration can mean inviting other teachers into your classroom, working together in settings like Professional Learning Communities,

connecting via book studies or other learning opportunities, or teaming up to meet professional development goals.

- In order to voice concerns and generate solutions at the school, district, local, and state level, teachers must *stay informed* on important issues in education. Having a voice in policymaking is an important task, but for that voice to be effective, teachers must know the ins and outs of the policy issues at stake. Reading books and publications, participating in programs like “Ed Week ... Every Week,” following the news, and teaming up with other teachers to keep one another informed are all ways in which teachers can keep themselves active in these conversations.
- In addition to inviting other teachers into their rooms to observe their practice, educators should also consider *opening their classrooms up to the community*. Whether this means inviting parents in once a week to observe, partnering with local organizations to work with students on real-world skills, or requesting that leaders from across the district and around the state visit their classrooms in order to get a better sense of what teaching and learning look like, simply throwing that classroom door open is a way to increase community engagement.

## School Level

- Within the larger context of their school site, teachers must help *build a community of trust*. This means that communication between different levels of school leadership must be totally transparent; teachers must ask who is making decisions about what goes on in their classrooms, why, and how those decisions are being made. Additionally, teachers should involve themselves in those decision-making processes. Teachers, in whatever ways possible, should influence administrators to let them try new practices in their classrooms without the knee-jerk reaction of “that’s not how we’ve always done it.” All parties must understand and trust that they are working with the interests of student learning as their top priority, and teachers must emphasize that priority when seeking and encouraging the trust of their administration. School sites should be places of respect and collaboration, not opacity and misunderstanding.
- Teacher leaders in various roles, especially those in technology integration and similar positions, must *implement new programs—and especially new technologies—thoughtfully*. Of course, there is much to be said for the amazing ways in which technology can transform teaching and learning, as has been seen in districts across the state. Mobile technology, in particular, continues to offer opportunities for differentiated instruction and Project-Based Learning. However, teachers should be prudent in the ways in which they go about adopting these new tools, and communicating their needs

and goals with school leaders. The technology alone will not make the difference; teachers need to seek the support, resources, and professional learning they need to put it to use effectively. Furthermore, they must help administrators understand that new programs take time to yield results. There can be a dip in achievement before new programs, especially technological ones, begin to pay off. Teacher leaders must be clear about the expectations of new technological initiatives, and must be honest about the results they are seeing; however, they must also push for the universal trust that will allow them to implement new programs effectively.

- It is important for teachers to learn to *communicate effectively* with administrators, and vice versa, in order to facilitate reflective conversations, especially around evaluations. Administrators and teacher leaders should attend trainings as whole-school teams that support and foster this type of communication and reflective thought in schools. Open, thoughtful, and productive communication can help teachers and their administrators understand one another and can give teachers a way to look closely at their practice.
- Teams of teacher leaders can have a major role in *building community programs* at the school that will both strengthen the bonds between parents, local residents, and the school, and provide necessary services for students, especially in more challenging neighborhoods. Teacher leaders can work with administrators to bring together community volunteers to help, for example, provide food for schoolchildren on weekends, so that they are not trying to focus on schoolwork or other responsibilities on an empty stomach. They could also help put together open houses where not just parents, but neighborhood residents could come and see student work. These sorts of programs show the community that the school is a vibrant and positive force.
- One of the most important roles teacher leaders can play at the school level is simply *designing the time teachers need to learn and grow*. In order for teachers to, as *The Global Fourth Way* authors put it, “teach less (and) learn more”—that is, spend less time in front of students and more time perfecting their practice—they need resources like release time, modified teaching schedules, opportunities to observe one another, and opportunities to come together to discuss teaching practice (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012). While this often proves to be the greatest challenge at the school level, teachers can advocate for themselves within the school context to receive the most valuable teaching resource of all: time. If teacher leaders come to the table with thoughtful and actionable ideas for how teaching time can be redesigned to benefit both instructors and their students, and can show administrators how such new programs will work, they are more likely to succeed in getting what they need from their school leaders.



## District Level

- Teacher leaders can also contribute to *asking for and developing time to improve their practice* at the district level. Teacher leader teams can design and present modified district-wide calendars that allow teachers to spend more time working together and learning from each other. If teachers contribute meaningfully to a community of trust at the district, as well as the school and classroom, level, they can make their needs known in this manner and have the possibility of succeeding. Again, self-advocacy on matters like teaching time is often challenging, but by participating in conversations wherein there is trust in all stakeholders' expertise and intentions, teacher leaders can at very least make their ideas known and have an impact on the thought processes and policy-setting activities of district personnel.
- Teacher leaders should design and help implement *differentiated professional development* for teachers at different stages in their practice, and should seek opportunities to provide these learning events across the district. Just as students in a single classroom run the gamut of abilities, needs, and dispositions, teachers come to professional development at many different levels in their growth as educators. Professional learning opportunities, therefore, cannot be one-size-fits-all; they should address a range of needs and experience levels meaningfully and usefully. Teacher leaders are the best architects of professional learning that meets different needs, as their experience at different stages of their own careers lends itself to an understanding of their own and colleagues' learning needs.
- The district is a great resource for *connecting peers across school sites*. Teacher leaders could reach out to others at different sites with similar skills, interests, and leadership goals, forging their own professional connections and helping others at their own sites to do the same by developing a large network. These networks could be in the form of advisory committees or more informal groups. This way, teachers would not feel isolated in their classrooms or schools, and more voices could be joined together. If teachers across districts were able to collaborate more, they would be able to gain more insight from one another into what accomplished teaching looks like, and could be united in the pursuit of addressing challenges on a more systemic level.
- Teacher leaders committed to bringing teachers' voices into larger conversations could design and offer *teacher advocacy training*. Teachers helping their peers learn to advocate for themselves and the profession could be among the most powerful learning opportunities offered throughout districts, though teacher leaders may face challenges in earning



the support of district personnel. This, too, goes back to building trust across levels of leadership, so that those at the district level understand teachers' desire to help one another learn to be effective advocates.

The training could involve bringing in experts such as association/union leadership, teacher leaders from their own and other districts, activists, local politicians, and policymakers. Such experts could help teachers stay informed about the issues affecting them and their students, and could also help them learn about avenues for speaking out. However, as helpful as expert guests would be in these contexts, the most important factor is that advocacy training is teacher designed and led. If these opportunities are designed by teacher leaders themselves, they are most likely to address the exact needs occurring within the district, which is why teachers assisting teachers is the best model, rather than a top-down or outside-in approach.

### **System Level**

- Perhaps the single most important thing teacher leaders can do to at the local, state, and federal levels is simple: *Find and embrace opportunities to be at the table*. Teacher leaders know that education policy should not be crafted without the voices of those who have taught and those who know intimately what is best for students—as well as those who will live and work with the resulting policies every day. Teaching ambassador programs and fellowships exist to bring educators' voices to the conversation, and seeking out those opportunities is an excellent way to get involved on a large scale.

But teachers should not be required to leave the classroom in order to be heard. Hybrid roles are growing in availability and popularity, allowing teachers to engage in leadership opportunities with national organizations and advocate at high levels for sound education policy, without leaving the classroom. Teacher leaders with the desire to have an impact at the systemic level can seek out—or, with the help of like-minded organizations, their district leaders, politicians, or other stakeholders, design—these hybrid roles.

- Teacher leaders must *invite system leaders into their practice*. Much of the poor decision-making and policy around education in the state and nation stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of what teachers do, what their strengths are, and what they need in order to do better. Teachers cannot expect system leaders to come to them; they must reach out with a combination of positivity and force, making it clear that policymakers cannot make the right decisions without firsthand experience of daily existence within classrooms and schools. Teachers can participate in

larger initiatives to bring stakeholders into classrooms across the state, but they must also be proactive, engaging in every opportunity to share their practice with top-level decision makers. This requires a familiarity with local, state, and even national politics, as teacher leaders need to know what decisions are being made, when, and by whom in order to choose their outreach activities prudently. It also requires developing a strong voice and knowledge base so that, when and if opportunities to share with high-level stakeholders present themselves, teacher leaders are sharing the most impactful information in the most accessible and potent way.

- Teacher leaders must advocate at every level for a *re-evaluation of assessment tools*, their purposes, and their outcomes. Standardized testing at every grade level starting in elementary school and following students through high school has been shown to be an ineffective and intrusive way of gathering student data. Other methods of assessment, based more in 21st century skills like problem solving and showing a depth of knowledge, should be considered. Teacher leaders have the closest understanding of these testing issues, and must share their knowledge and experiences in various advocacy environments with those who create and those who mandate assessments. Reaching out to policymakers through everything from phone calls and social media to physical attendance at forums and rallies should be a central part of teacher leaders' efforts to impact testing mandates.

## Conclusion

As demonstrated by case studies from all around the world, many of which are documented in *The Global Fourth Way*, educational change is possible, and it is *happening now*. The United States has, unfortunately, not yet lived up to its potential to have the best and most innovatively educated students on the planet, but that potential still very much exists. In classrooms across the nation and within the state of Arizona, passionate, accomplished teachers are making strides toward providing the best education possible for our students. Teacher leaders are coming together to make their ideas known and their voices heard. Challenges await, but we as a community of teacher leaders have a vision for the future of education and a set of solutions with which to meet challenges.

But teacher leaders, as powerful as their voices are, can't do it alone. We believe that with the help of all stakeholders, from community members to parents to school, district, local, state, and national leaders, we can work within the Fourth Way of change and see the education system we know is possible for our children. As teacher leaders, we are committed to *reaching out to stakeholders* at every level and in every arena, to *sharing our vision*, and to *driving the change* we desire through pointed individual and collective

action. We are inspired by the global and local examples shared here, as well as the myriad others we know are out there, and prepared to take the steps necessary to bring positive, Fourth Way change into every classroom and context in the state.

We invite all stakeholders, but *especially* teacher leaders themselves, to look hard at the stories of the world's top performers, as well as the anchoring illustrations throughout the state of Arizona. We invite them to look hard at the Pointers for Practice outlined here and think about how they can be implemented in schools, districts, and in policymaking discussions at the state and national level. And of course, we invite them to engage with the Arizona K12 Center, and attend the *Ninth Annual Teacher Leadership Institute* on June 17–19, 2014, where we will generate still more stories and solutions for the future of education.

## Citations

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